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REVIEW & OUTLOOK

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Comrade Andropov

Yuri Andropov's seizure of the top job in the Soviet Communist Party and empire was the most widely predicted succession in 64 years of Soviet government. That tells us something about Mr. Andropov but it tells us more about the importance the KGB has assumed in the internal and external affairs of the Soviet Union.

Mr. Andropov is not cut from quite the same mold as old Bolsheviks like Khrushchev and Brezhnev nor is he quite like some former secret police thugs. Stalin's notorious Lavrenti Beria, for example. Tall and urbane, he speaks excellent English, likes

Soviet Crossroads—II

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Glenn Miller records, good Scotch whisky, Oriental rugs and American books. His career soared after he successfully deceived Hungarian freedom fighter Pal Maleter in 1956, sending him to his death and quelling the bloody Hungarian uprising. According to defector Petro Grigorenko, a former major general in the Soviet army, Mr. Andropov's skills at suppressing dissent have been finely honed through countless similar deceptions as he has moved up through the ranks. Where Beria failed to seize absolute power, Andropov has finally given the KGB the status it so richly deserves.

The Andropov succession confirms what a lot of people have suspected: The KGB has become the most important power base within the party. To understand how this has happened it is necessary to have a better appreciation of the size and scope of the KGB than most Americans have. It is indeed an espionage organization, but it is much, much more.

No one outside of a small coterie in the Kremlin and in KGB headquarters at nearby Dzerzhinsky Square knows the exact size of the KGB payroll, but a good estimate would start at one million men and women and go up from there. It runs its own military

force, an elite, well-equipped body of several hundred thousand officers and troops who guard the Soviet Union's 42,000-mile border, protect important officials and control sensitive communications systems. Its officers operate within the regular armed forces, ever vigilant for any signs of defection or dissent from party control. It spies on foreign visitors, bugging embassies and hotel rooms and culling information from such sources as Intourist guides. It spies on ordinary Soviet citizens through an elaborate system of informers, *agents provocateur* and full-time plainclothes cops, who also employ "intimidation" and "strong-arm" tactics when asked.

The fact that the KGB is one of the most effective and successful Soviet bureaucracies undoubtedly furthered Mr. Andropov's career. For example, the Pentagon has lately been reviewing the systematic way the Soviets "vacuum-cleaned" the U.S. for high technology in the 1970s when detente opened up scientific and commercial exchanges. The effort exploited legal purchases of U.S. equipment, illegal purchases through third countries, legal information gathering by Soviet exchange scientists and, in some cases, outright theft.

It is assumed that a high percentage of Soviet citizens who are assigned abroad either work directly for the KGB or provide the organization with any services demanded of them. They would be foolish not to, considering the organization's power over their careers; a job at the U.N. is far preferable to a housing office in Minsk. Hence, any Soviet citizen, whether he be part of the large trade mission in Mexico City, or selling Lada cars in Panama, or working for Aeroflot in London, can never be regarded as simply an ordinary foreign national.

It is one task of the KGB to apply its skills of secrecy and deception to projecting the Soviet party's influence. This it does through contacts with legal Communist Parties abroad, with groups sympathetic to Soviet

goals, with do-gooders of the type that Lenin once described as "useful idiots" and with the intelligence agencies of friendly powers. Given a Russian penchant for deception that goes back centuries, its agents are very good at this kind of work.

Western intelligence experts assume that the KGB effectively controls the intelligence services of those countries that are economically and militarily beholden to the Soviet Union, possibly with the exception of Vietnam. The agents of the Cuban DGI blend far more easily into the life of Latin American countries than would Russians. Indeed, they blend easily into Spanish-speaking areas of the U.S. Soviet-Cuban penetration into the politics of Central America, Nicaragua in particular, has undoubtedly been a feather in Mr. Andropov's cap.

The new Soviet chief worked many years at Moscow Center directing the KGB's troops, strategists, spooks and thugs, using them for internal control and the projection of Soviet influence abroad. He arrives at a time when the Soviet Communist Party is faced with a "crisis of legitimacy," that is to say rising questions among the Soviet peoples about whether it can improve their sad circumstances of life.

We know he is capable of suppression. We know that he is skillful at manipulating the agents and groups abroad who serve Soviet imperialist aims. What we don't know is whether he has any better ideas than Mr. Brezhnev had for making the Soviet system more economically viable and more capable of unlocking the latent creativeness and energy of its citizens. If he does it will be a surprise. It is no surprise that, with the Communist empire suffering economic decline, ideological exhaustion and eroding popular morale, the party finds a leader at this juncture of history by turning to the mastermind of its secret police.

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